

Inclement Weather Procedures for USAG Ansbach

By Bianca Sowders, USAG Ansbach Public Affairs Office

What are the first steps, when inclement weather (fog, snow, ice) occurs?

The Military Police patrol cars check the roads on specific routes on and off post between 2 – 4 a.m. during inclement weather season. The officers forward their gathered data and information to the Director of Emergency Services (DES). The determination of the road conditions is made by the Garrison Commander in coordination with the DES by 5 a.m. and posted by 5:30 a.m. In case of overnight snow fall, DPW and German snow removal services engage around 4 a.m. (or earlier, if necessary); their focus is on primary roads; secondary roads may not be cleared for several days, depending on the amount of snow. Everyone should note that the road condition determination is a general call and may not reflect the situation in anyone's immediate area. Obviously, weather is not identical everywhere within the USAG Ansbach footprint. Everyone should know their local situation and the general situation in order to determine their own individual course of action.

Road Conditions

The military road conditions (**GREEN**, **AMBER**, **RED** and **BLACK**) apply to military dispatched vehicles only! If the conditions are **BLACK**, no more military dispatched vehicles, including TMPs, will be allowed to move. The only exceptions are Emergency Services (fire trucks, MPs, etc.) and snow plows.

For all the rest of us, who are driving our privately owned vehicles (POVs), the military road conditions are a good indicator of the safety of roads on and off post. Soldiers and employees need to make a weather call to their supervisor, if they feel it is unsafe to drive, and get further instructions. Road conditions, published or unpublished, are not reason alone to miss work or official appointments. If the Garrison Commander determines that weather conditions deem it necessary to close the installation, it will be included in the road condition message.

Everyone should use common sense and make a call on safety's side, if they are not sure they can drive safely in inclement weather or if the forecast calls for worsening conditions – when in doubt, do not drive!

Road conditions in detail:

GREEN - Dry road surface, no ice or snow on the road surface; visibility is more than 50 meters (160 feet).

AMBER - Any of the following on the road surface: Patches of black ice/slush, up to four inches of snow and/or visibility between 20-50 meters (60 – 160 feet)– slow down (below 50kph/32mph) and drive with caution!

RED - Any of the following on the road surface: Flooding, drifting snow, ice sheets, four to eight inches of snow and/or visibility is less than 20 meters (60 feet).

BLACK - Any of the following on the road surface: Heavy flooding, heavy snow drifts, extreme sheets of ice, more than eight inches of snow and/or visibility less than 15 meters (50 feet)

During significant winter weather with heavy prolonged snowfall and possibly delayed snow and ice removal, DES and the Garrison Commander may change the road conditions to RED and decide on a two-hour delay for school and garrison employees in order to allow extra time for snow removal. Check the appropriate channels before you head out. Its good advice for everyone to confirm a delay with their supervisor, that is simply good communication.

Example: If a two-hour delay is announced, the school buses will arrive at the designated stops two hours later than usual. Garrison employees can arrive two hours after their usual start time; this will give them ample time to take care of snow removal at home and take extra driving time.

In extreme/severe winter conditions, like prolonged heavy blizzards, the road conditions may be changed to BLACK. The message going out to the community could include the following: "Schools are closed. Only mission essential personnel report to work, as designated by the unit chain of command. Stay home or indoors when possible." Call your supervisor, if you are not sure what applies to you.

How is the community informed?

- Tune in to AFN Bavaria Radio for USAG Ansbach road, school and work conditions or go to www.facebook.com/afnbavaria
- IMCOM-Europe Road Condition & School Delay/Closure website at www.imcom-europe.army.mil/webs/sites/staff_org/safety/road_conditions/index.asp
- USAG Ansbach Facebook page at www.facebook.com/U.S.Army.Garrison.Ansbach
- USAG Ansbach Road Condition message line: 09802-83-3882

Winter Driving Tips:

Reduce speed and increase distance between vehicles; don't try to pass and be aware that fall leaves or hidden sheets of ice (especially on bridges and overpasses) may turn the road into a slippery ice rink. Do not drive outside of your comfort zone or capabilities; if you are insecure about driving in winter weather, it may be better to postpone that shopping trip to a later time.

Have the appropriate tires! Only approved tires with the mud & snow symbol (M&S), a snowflake or an alpine symbol are allowed on German roads, once the conditions change to icy and slippery, so don't chance a ticket or an accident! A common rule of thumb for the time frame to use winter tires is October to Easter. All-weather tires must be marked with one of the symbols above and have at least 4 mm of tread depth to qualify as winter tires; to test your tires, place a penny with Lincoln's head pointing down in between the treads – if you can see the top of Abraham Lincoln's head, your tires need to be replaced. Use snow chains, if necessary; definitely carry some "quick mounts" with you when you go driving in the mountains. Add extra travel time any time of the day, and, once again, slow down!

Snow and ice removal in housing and residential areas:

Roads on post will be plowed as soon as possible, but please be careful and patient; residents are responsible for snow removal in their own drive-ways. Leased housing or private rentals residents are usually responsible for snow and ice removal in their own drive-ways and on the public sidewalk bordering their residence; make sure to check with your landlord on your personal responsibilities. In most cases, personnel living off post in private rental are required to keep their sidewalks and access to their property cleared from snow and ice 7 a.m. -7 p.m. every host nation work day.

In case of sheet ice, use a limited amount of special rock salt, available at Self Help Stores (Katterbach Bldg. 5516 and Storck bldg. 6555) for housing customers, and in small quantities for units and organizations. Off-post residents can purchase the salt called "Streusalz" in local DIY stores or supermarkets. Salt works best when it has to melt only a thin layer of snow or ice. Remove as much snow from sidewalks and driveways before applying rock salt; apply the salt evenly and use no more than one handful per square yard. The salt will melt the snow and ice gradually. Keeping the ground free of ice and snow will prevent the build-up of thick ice sheets which are very hard to remove in freezing temperatures. Rock salt does not work well below 15 degrees Fahrenheit (- 9 Celcius). Do not use rock salt over plants or lawns, as it will cause severe damage. Do not use rock salt over metal, it will corrode the metal. Use it sparingly and not in areas where the melted snow will drain into streams, rivers, or lakes; salt residue can pollute the environment. Environmentally safe alternatives to salt are sand, fine gravel (grit) or organic granulate, which will not melt the ice, but give you traction and comply with host nation regulations.

Winter in Germany can be a lot of fun, as long as everyone realizes that the pace has changed and you just can't do everything the same way you could during summer times. The most important thing to remember is that everyone's safety comes first and it is up to you to make the right decision and take the appropriate action. Stay safe!